

# Collaborative Action

## Redefining Child Welfare Through Connection

January 16, 2025



**Safe Babies**  
A Program of ZERO TO THREE™



# Infant-Toddler Court Program National Resource Center

The National Infant-Toddler Court Program was made possible through the support of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$6,750.000 with 0 percent financed from non-governmental sources.

The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov).



# Learning Objectives

1. Leaning into discomfort to understand our biases.
2. Understanding how our biases impact meaning making of a parent's behavior.
3. Learn about the benefits and struggles of implementing reflective practice in child welfare spaces.
4. Ways to improve collaboration by remembering our stance and the importance of ruptures and repairs.

# Reflective Practice

Our own journeys into  
finding reflective  
practice/spaces



# How does bias impact meaning making of a parents' behavior?

Case Examples



# Speaking the Unspeakable

- Reflective practice as a gateway to looking at bias
- Looking inward – self-reflection and having honest conversations
- Reflective practice is another way of slowing down our work, organizing our thoughts and thinking about what is coming up for a person that may impact how they interact with a client and possible decision-making
- Laying the groundwork for a larger cultural shift

SHAME DERIVES ITS POWER FROM BEING  
UNSPEAKABLE...IF WE SPEAK SHAME, IT  
BEGINS TO WITHER. JUST THE WAY EXPOSURE  
TO LIGHT WAS DEADLY FOR THE GREMLINS,  
LANGUAGE AND STORY BRING LIGHT TO  
SHAME AND DESTROY IT.

- BRENE BROWN -

LIBQUOTES.COM

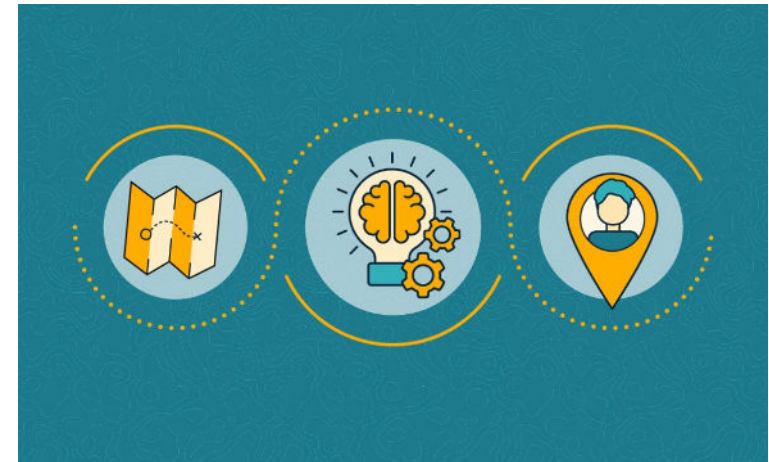
Speaking the unspeakable. As a leader, you need to not just listen to what's being said, but more importantly, what's not being said.

Pearl Zhu

# Implementation

Reframing reflective practice: It does not have to be an additional task, but rather an additional support.

- Benefits and struggles to bringing reflective practice to child welfare
- Implementation efforts in progress





# Collaboration

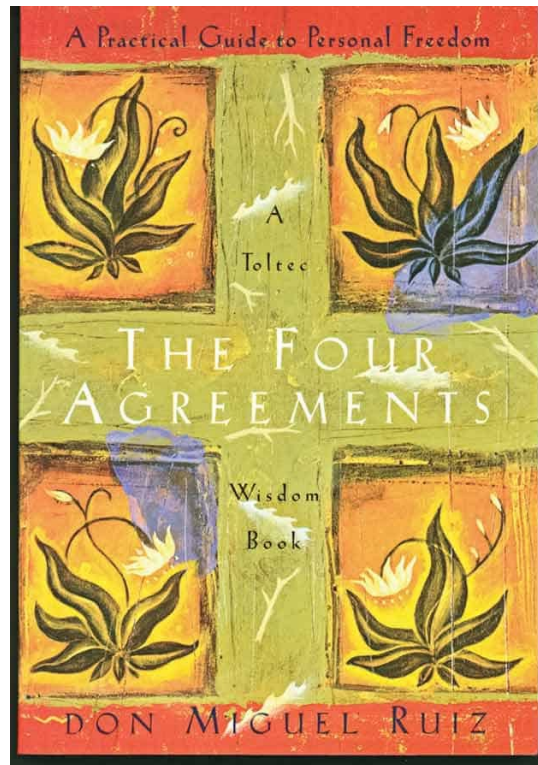
How to Support  
Collaboration



**Safe Babies**  
A Program of ZERO TO THREE™



# My Stance = My Actions



## The Four Agreements

by Don Miguel Ruiz

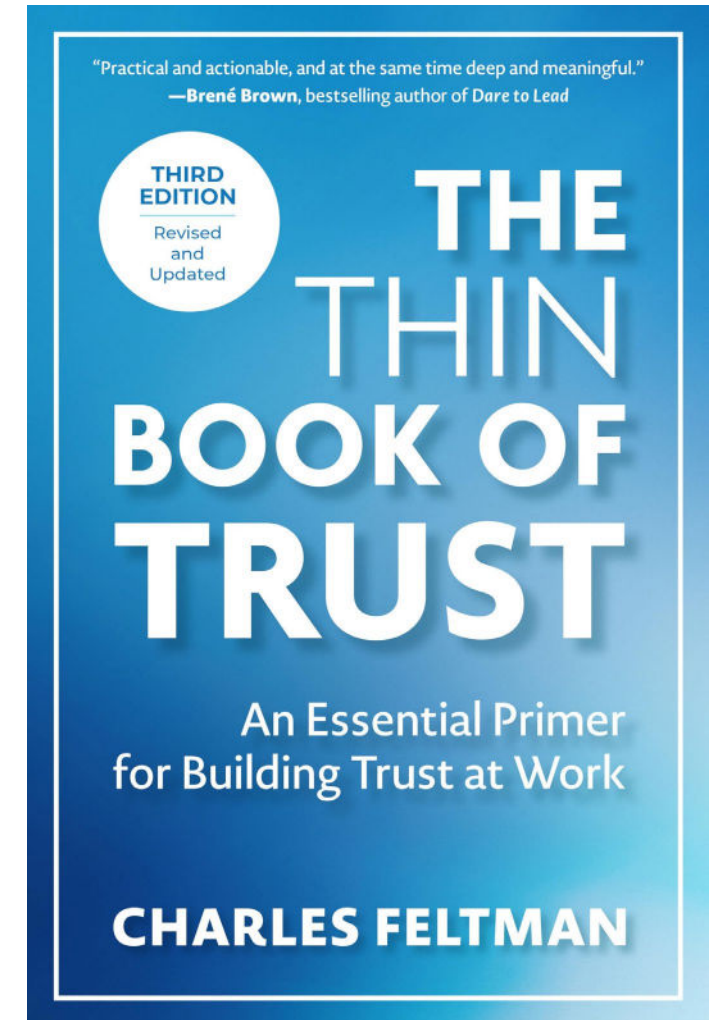
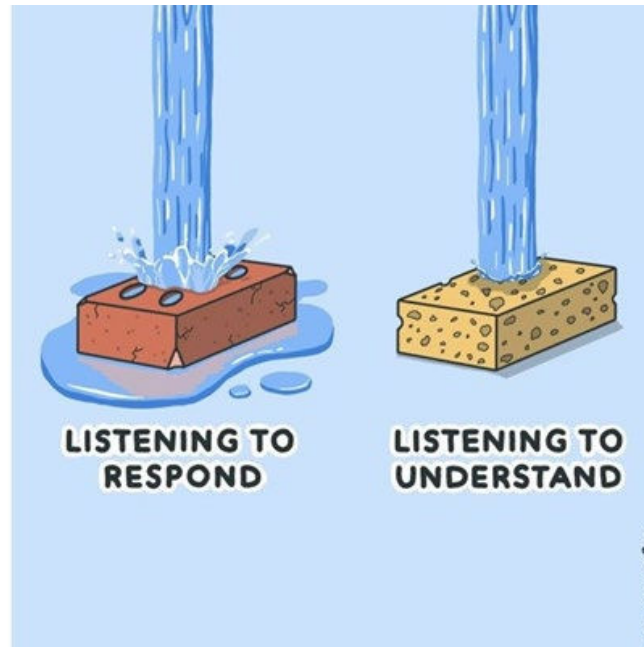
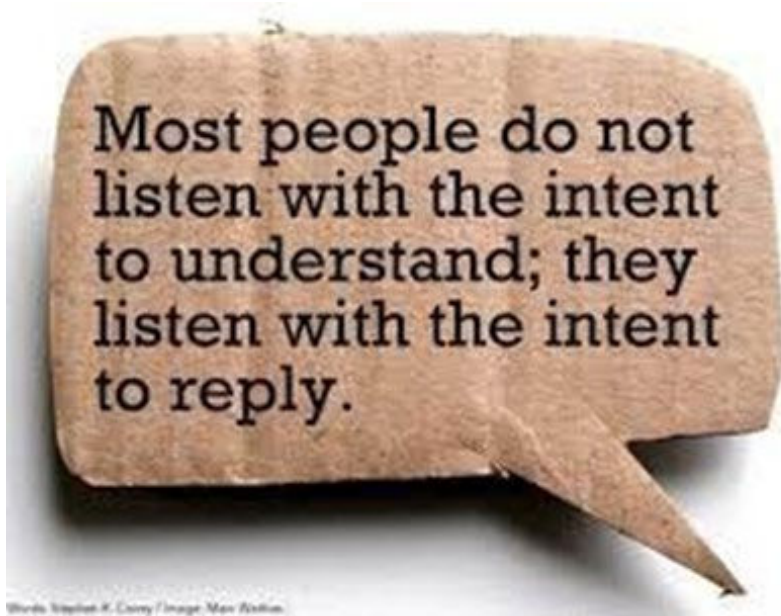
- 1 BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD**
  - a. Speak with integrity.
  - b. Say only what you mean.
  - c. Avoid using the Word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others.
  - d. Use the power of your Word in the direction of truth and love.
- 2 DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY**
  - a. Nothing others do is because of you.
  - b. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream.
  - c. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.
- 3 DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS**
  - a. Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want.
  - b. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness and drama.
  - c. With just this one agreement, you can completely transform your life.
- 4 ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST**
  - a. Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick.
  - b. Under any circumstance, simply do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.

# Why?



# Trust

- How do you define trust?
  - “Choosing to risk making something you value vulnerable to another person’s actions.”





# Attunement

## How do you build trust and form relationships?

Attunement “When we attune with others, we allow our own internal state to shift, to come to resonate with the inner world of another. This resonance is at the heart of the important sense of ‘feeling felt’ that emerges in relationships.” Dan Siegal

## How does this occur at all levels of work?



# Rupture & Repair

The goal is not to avoid ruptures, it is to learn to repair them.

- It is important to focus on how we engage with one another during the rupture and how we repair it.

**Trust is created by the repeated process of repairing ruptures.**

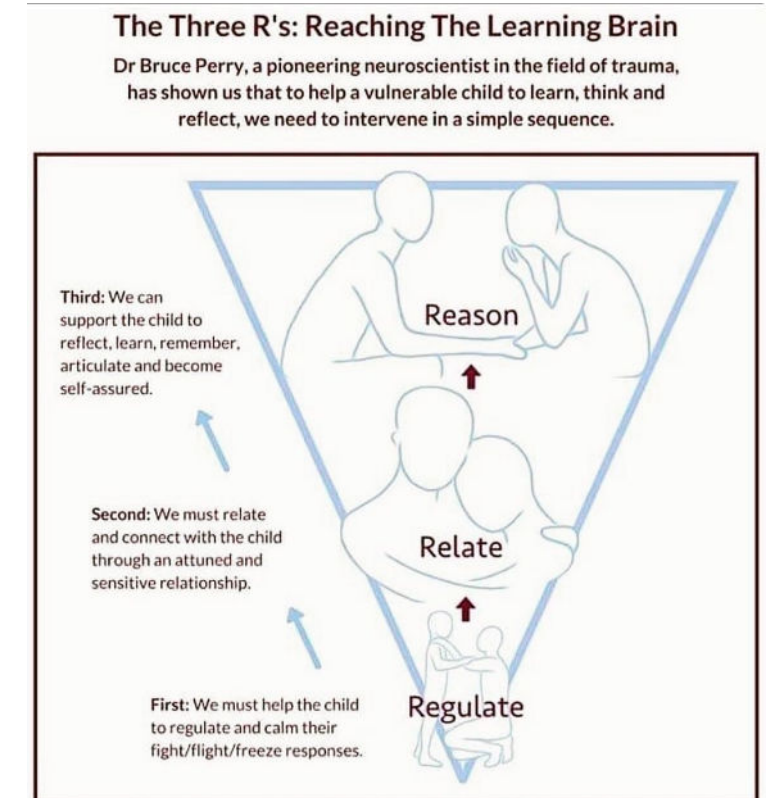
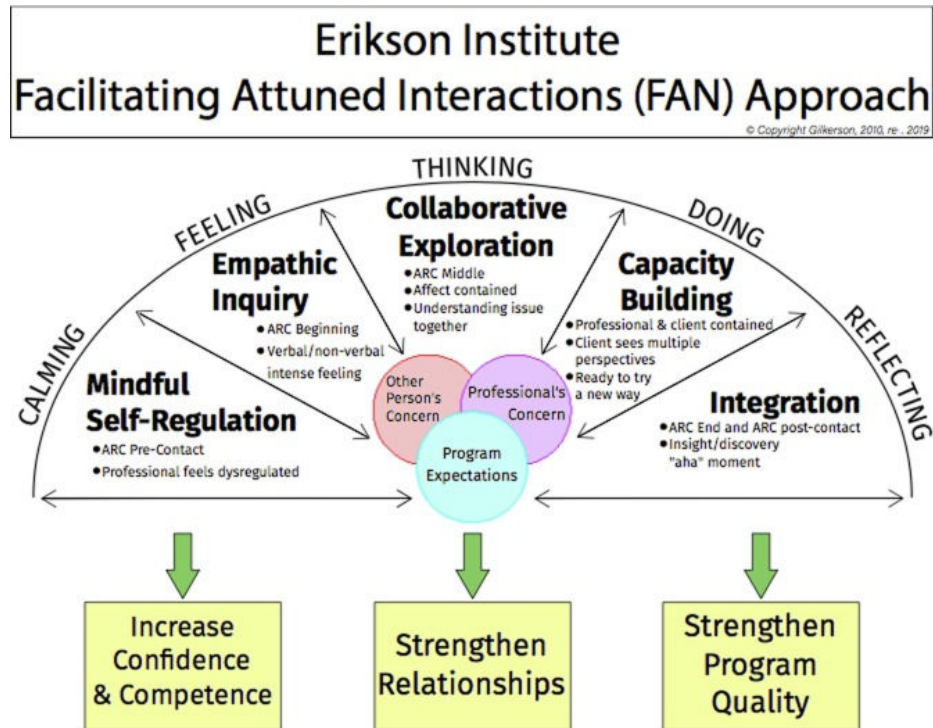
**With trust, we can:**

- To do things differently
- Trust the process we co-construct together
- Begin to understand how we come together as a team

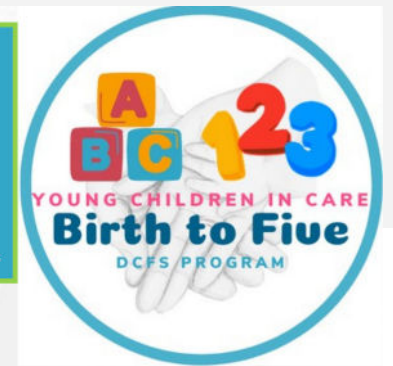




# Some Tools for Action



# Los Angeles County, CA – Young Children in Care Birth to Five Program



## BACKGROUND

As of 2022, children aged birth to five make up 30% of the total child population in Los Angeles County; however, they make up 49% of all the new entries into foster care with 23% of those entries being Black children.\* As of January 2024, per DCFS data, this age group makes up an average of 40% of all open cases in DCFS. Children in this age group are extremely vulnerable due to the critical period of physical and socio-emotional development. However, young children's brains are the most malleable, which means that the earlier we can intervene to strengthen nurturing supportive relationships between children and their caregivers, the more likely we can have a positive impact on their life trajectory.

## YCIC BIRTH TO FIVE PROGRAM

The YCIC Birth to Five Program is designed to strengthen emerging practices and policy guidelines around engaging, assessing and servicing newborns, infants, toddlers and preschoolers (ages birth to five) and their caregiver(s). Staff within this program will be supporting countywide birth to five work, as well as supporting YCIC Birth to Five Program practices in DCFS regional offices. There is a Birth to Five policy as of February 2024 to assist CSWs in better assessing and servicing children and families from birth to age five.

Currently, the YCIC Birth to Five Program has begun DCFS office-level support in four offices: Palmdale, Pasadena, Belvedere and Vermont Corridor. This support includes building an office-based birth to five program, resource gathering, case presentations, team building, training and more.

In addition, the YCIC Birth to Five Program now has a dedicated email inbox for anyone to contact for support countywide.

## ASK THE YCIC BIRTH TO FIVE PROGRAM

[birthto5program@dcfs.lacounty.gov](mailto:birthto5program@dcfs.lacounty.gov)

- Case Questions
- Resource Questions
- Data and Outcome Questions
- Training Related Questions
- Request for a Case Consultation
- Other Birth to Five Support Questions

### Practice Tip: Assessing Social Connections

Everyone needs help in raising children. Who is there to help support the caregiver and child? What do others say about the child's experience with caregiver? Who knows about the safety worries and how can they help?

## ABCs ALL BABIES NEED LOVING AND ATTUNED CAREGIVERS

### 123s

- 1 Observe, assess & document the relationship between the baby and each caregiver.
- 2 Find ways to strengthen the relationship between the baby and each caregiver.
- 3 When unsure about the relationship, CONSULT.

### Practice Tip: Assessing Nurturing & Attachment

Take a closer look at interactions between children and all adults in the home. How does the caregiver show love and support to the child? How does the child respond? How does the parent describe the child?

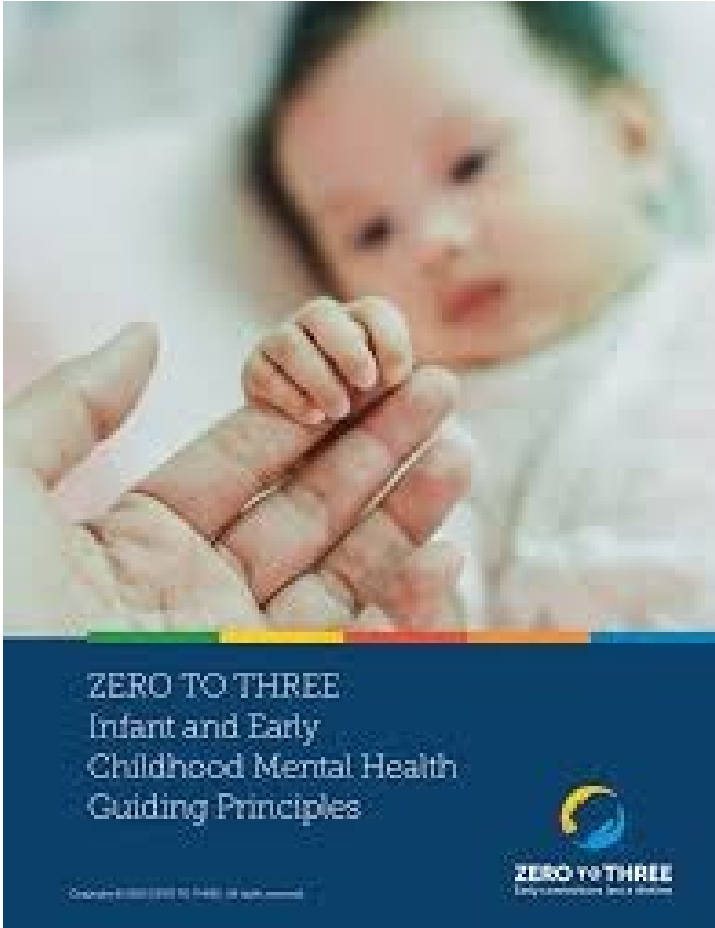
## WHAT'S TO COME

Each service area is uniquely individual. The YCIC Birth to Five office-level framework will be developed in areas where our program can support each office's specific needs. Further, the program will support a countywide transdiscipline model to bring all county programs and community stakeholders to support the needs of young children and their families. Some areas include, but are not limited to:

- Case Consultation
- Training Support
- Central and Regional Resource Building
- YCIC Birth to Five Office-Level Program Development
- Case Presentation Framework
- Data Collection
- And More!

\*California Child Welfare Indicators Project: February 9, 2024 (<https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/>)

# Resources to Consider



## ZTT IECMH Guiding Principles document

## Birth Parents with Trauma Histories & the CW System

## Diversity Informed Tenets



## THE TENETS

DIVERSITY-INFORMED TENETS FOR WORK  
WITH INFANTS, CHILDREN & FAMILIES



# Thank you

Danielle Rivera, LCSW –  
[riverd2@dcfs.lacounty.gov](mailto:riverd2@dcfs.lacounty.gov)

Jessica Lertora, LCSW-C, IMH-E  
[Jlertora@zerotothree.org](mailto:Jlertora@zerotothree.org)



**Safe Babies**  
A Program of ZERO TO THREE™



**ZERO TO THREE**  
Early connections last a lifetime

